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The Cobler of Meſſina.

There is a ſort of enthuſiaſm in public ſpirit, which renders it politically prudent in corrupt ſtateſmen to diſcourage it; and yet there is ſomething ſo great and ſo divine in this enthuſiaſm, that ſtateſmen of a better turn, though they dare not encourage, yet cannot but admire it. We have a ſhining and ſurpriſing example of this in the cobler of Meſſina, which is at once a proof that public ſpirit is the growth of every degree——And, which is a point that our great men ought to conſider with attention, that wherever corruption becomes noted, this heroic lunacy of public ſpirit is moſt likely to appear.

This cobler was an honeſt man, and, I was going to ſay, poor; but when I conſider that he maintained his family, and was above de-

pendance, I cannot prevail upon myſelf to make uſe of the expreſſion. He was alſo a man of reflection, he ſaw the corruption, luxury, and oppreſſion, the private frauds, the public robberies, the enormous violation of juſtice, under which his country labored. He ſaw rapes unpuniſhed, adulteries unreproved, barbarous murders either ſcreened by church ſanctuaries, or attoned for by money; in a word, he ſaw a univerſal degeneracy of manners, partly from the want of will, partly from the want of power in the government to chaſtiſe offenders. In this ſituation he reſolved to undertake the arduous taſk of reforming theſe diſorders, and thought it both lawful and expedient to aſſume the authority of avenger of the inocent, and the terror of the guilty.

Full of this romantic reſolution, he provided himſelf with a ſhort gun, which he carried under his cloak, and equiped with a powder-pouch on one thigh, and a bag of balls on the other, he ſallied out in the evening, and as proper oppertunities offered, he diſpatched ſuch as he knew to be incorrigible offenders to that tribunal, where he was ſenſible they could not elude juſtice; and then returned home full of that ſatisfaction which is the ſole reward of public ſpirit. As there were in Meſſina a great number of theſe overgrown criminals, the cobler, in the ſpace of a few

weeks, did a world of execution. The ſun never roſe without diſcovering freſh marks of his juſtice; here lay a uſurer, who had ruined hundreds; there an unjuſt magiſtrate, who had been the curſe of thouſands; in one corner, a nobleman, who had debauched his friends wife; in another, a man of the ſame rank, who, through avarice and ambition, had proſtituted his own; but as the bodies were always untouched, with all their ornaments about them, and very often with conſiderable ſums in their pockets, it was viſible they were not diſpatched for the ſake of money; and their numbers made it as evident, that they did not fall victims to private revenge.

It is not in the power of words to deſcribe the aſtoniſhment of the whole city; and things came at laſt to ſuch a paſs, that not a rogue of any rank whatever, durſt walk the ſtreets; complaint was carried to the viceroy; and magiſtrates; guards, ſpies, and every other engine of power, were employed to no manner of purpoſe. At laſt, when no leſs than fifty examples had been made, the viceroy took a ſerious reſolution of putting a ſtop to theſe miſchiefs, by the only method that ſeemed capable of reaching the evil; he cauſed public proclamation to be made, that he would give the ſum of 2000 crowns to any perſon who ſhould diſcover the author or authors of theſe murders, promiſing, at the ſame

time, the like reward, with an abſolute indemnity, to the perſon who had done them, if he would diſcover himſelf; and as a pledge of his ſincerity, he went to the cathedral, & took the ſacrament, that he would punctually perform every tittle of the proclamation.

The cobler, having either ſatiſfied his zeal of juſtice, or being now in a temper to ſecure his own ſafety; after having, in his own opinion, done much ſervice to the ſtate, went directly to the palace, and demanded an audience of the viceroy, to whom, upon his declaring that he had ſomething of great importance to communicate, he was admited alone. He began with putting his excellency in mind of his oath, who aſſured him he meant to keep it religiouſly. The cobler then proceeded to the following harrangue. "I, ſir, have been alone that inſtrument of juſtice, who diſpatched in ſo ſhort a time, ſo many criminals. In doing this, ſir, I have done no more than what was your duty to do. You, ſir, who, in reality, are guilty of all the offences which theſe wretches committed, deſerved the ſame chaſtiſement, and had met with it too, had I not reſpected the repreſentative of my prince, who, I know, is accountable to God alone." He then entered into an exact detail of all the murders he had done, and the motives upon which he had proceeded. The viceroy, who was thoroughly convinced, that

he told him no more than the truth, repeated his aſſurances of ſafety, and thanked him very affectionately for the tenderneſs he had ſhewn him, adding, after all, he was ready to pay the 2000 crowns.

Our cobler returned the viceroy his compliments in his rough way; but told him, after what had paſſed, he believed it would be but prudent in him to make choice of ſome other city for his habitation, and that too in ſome corner of Italy not under the juriſdiction of his catholic majeſty. The viceroy thought his reaſons had weight, and, therefore, after thanking him in the moſt gracious terms for ſupplying that power which the government wanted, he ordered a tartane to tranſport him, his family, his effects, and 2000 crowns, to one of the ports in the territory of Genoa; where this extraordinary perſon paſſed the remainder of his days in eaſe and quiet, and the city of Meſſina felt, for a long time after, the good effects of his enthuſiaſtic zeal for the public good, and for the firſt execution of juſtice, without reſpect to perſons.

The Paſtor and his Flock.

The people of a certain place,
Refuſ'd a paſtor to embrace,
Unleſs that he would undertake
The weather to their minds to make,

The thing was hard, you will confeſs,
To be accompliſh'd with ſucceſs;
And therefore moſt the charge declin'd,
By reaſon of the taſk enjoin'd,
At length one wiſer than the reſt,
A candidate himſelf profeſs'd;
And he did frankly take in hand
To ſatisfy all their demand.
His word of honor he did give,
And promiſed if he did live,
That they ſhould have, when he was plac'd,
Such weather as would ſuit them beſt,
On this aſſurance, great and ſmall,
Without delay gave him a call;
And ſoon as this was once obtain'd,
With all diſpatch he was ordain'd,
Now, full of hopes, they all expect
To ſee his promiſe take effect;
But, to their diſappointment ſore,
The weather prov'd juſt as before,
Of this ſome loudly did complain,
(Now that they thought their hopes were vain)
And now their paſtor they accuſ'd,
That he had groſly them abus'd.
Now ſome in ſecret diſcontent,
Did their unhappy caſe lament;
Some to their paſtor ſtrait repair'd,
And their complaint to him declar'd.
He firſt did gravely reprimand
This bold, impatient, wild demand,
Told them they need not be afraid,

For he'd make good what he had ſaid.
On this they with ſubmſſion crav'd
His pardon, and themſelves behav'd
With all reſpect and reverence,
And ſtill in him put confidence.
My friends, quoth he, to teſtify
My readineſs to gratify
Your inclination, and to ſhow
My own veracity alſo,
With your conſent, I chooſe to hear
The public voice in this affair ;
Let's call a meeting then, and ſend
To warn the pariſh to attend.
And if you pleaſe, without delay,
We'll for the meeting fix a day,
The motion was approv'd, and ſo
They all content away did go,
Muſing or talking all the way,
Of the importance of the day.
The day is come ; the people meet,
And one another kindly greet :
Enters the prieſt amongſt the reſt,
Who thus the audience addreſt :
"Mr friends, the cauſe of this our meeting,
You all well know without repeating ;
You'd have the weather as you will——
I've promis'd, and will now fulfil :
I muſt your ſentiments conſult,
And of the ſame know the reſult.
Be pleaſed then to let me know
How you would have the weather blow ?

You, friend, (I know not yet your names)
Then ſtood up one, my name is James.
Well, James, your judgment—tell me plain,
What weather chooſe you?—I'm for rain.—
You, honeſt man: what is your name?
Is it not John?—The very ſame.
Then John, what ſay you?—I'm for drought.
And you, the next, your mind ſpeak out;
Are you for rain, or for dry weather?
Why, really, ſir, I am—for neither.
For neither, ſay you!—pray what then?
You muſt, my friend, yourſelf explain.
Temperate weather I think beſt.
Then ſays one, let the wind blow weſt.
Nay, from the eaſt, another ſays,
I'd have it blow for certain days.—
My friends, ſays he, this will not do;
Who can give rain and dryneſs too?
At preſent you cannot agree;
We muſt therefore diſmiſs, I ſee,
'Gainſt the next meeting make your choice;
Speak your opinion with one voice;
Be of one mind; and then I ſhall
Give weather that will pleaſe you all.

The juſt man has a heavenly treaſure, that can never be known by any other, But, ah me! where is the juſt man that ſinneth not? he is not to be found living on the earth.

Let man know himſelf and be humble, and he may be ſo juſt as to be bleſſed and happy.

Reflections.

Why do mortals love this world so highly? what is there here that claims the heart?

This world is empty vanity,
And vaniſhes when once we die.

Yet vain man would be rich in things of a subsolary nature, and sits his heart thereon.

Did we but view ihe infinite need that we are in of a better good, how should we think much less of treasures here! We cannot tarry here but a few days, then we shall want a mansion house in a far distant world, for to repair unto.

Think of this, and seek the things above: be born again, or when we die, where shall we go? we cannot enter heaven.

A little while we have, for to prepare to meet our God: but short as are our days, let us be faithful, and O the joys before us!

A FRAGMENT.

In simple manners all the secret lies;
Be meek and virtuous, you'll be blest & wise.
Vain shew and noise intoxicate the brain,
Begin with giddiness, and end with pain.
Affect not empty fame, nor idle praise,
Which dazzles, captivates, & soon betrays.

The London Popular preacher.

London is never without a certain number of popular preachers. I am not now ſpeaking of thoſe who are popular among the ſectarians, or becauſe they introduce ſectarian doctrines into the church; but of that ſpecific character among the regular Engliſh clergy, which is here denominated a popular preacher. You may well imagine, that, as the tree is known by its fruits, I have not a Luis de Grenada, nor an Antonio Vieyra to deſcribe. Thread-bare garments of religious poverty, eyes weakened by inceſſant tears of contrition, or of pious love, and cheeks withered by faſting and penitence, would have few charms for that part of the congregation for whom the popular preacher of London curls his forelock, ſtudies geſtures at his looking glaſs, takes leſſons from ſome ſtage-player in his chamber, and diſplays his white hand and white handkerchief in the pulpit. The diſcourſe is in character with the orator; nothing to rouſe a ſlumbering conſcience, nothing to alarm the ſoul at a ſenſe of its danger, no difficulties expounded to confirm the wavering, no mighty truths enforced to rejoice the faithful,—to look for theology here would be * ſeeking pears from the elm; only a little ſmooth morality, ſuch as Turk, Jew, or Infidel, may liſten to with-

out offence, ſparkling with metaphors and ſimilies, and rounded off with a text of ſcripture, a ſcrap of poetry, or, better than either, a quotation from Oſſian.—To have a clergy exempt from the frailties of human nature is impoſſible; but the true church has effectually ſecured hers from the vanities of the world: we may ſometimes have to grieve, becauſe the wolf has got on the ſhepherd's cloak, but never can have need to bluſh at ſeeing the monkey in it.

Manuel's Letters.

* *Pedir peras al olmo.*

REMARK.

There is no better way, perhaps, to conduct ourselves toward certain men, then to treat them with neglect. There is a set of men, who, if they gain our attention enough to animadvert upon their conduct, they have a great end in their scurrility answered. These miserable beings are not worthy of notice for their folly, it is so low; and indeed, if we look after their meanness, we approach too near going in their eternally infamous ways.

Let envy its own course pursue,
And its own hell itself will rue.

REV. MR. HAGEMORE.

This gentleman, who lived at Calthorn, Leicestershire, died the first of January, 1746, possessed of 700 l, per annum, and 1000l, in money, which fell to a ticket porter in London. He kept one servant of each sex, whom he locked up every night. His last employment in the evening was to go round his premises, let loose his dogs, and fire his gun. He lost his life in the following extraordinary manner. Going one morning to let out his servants, the dogs fawned upon him suddenly, & threw him into a pond, where he was breast high. The servants heard him call out for assistance, but, being locked up, could not afford him any, and he drowned. He had thirty gowns & cassocks, fiftyeight dogs, one hundred pair of breaches, one hundred pair of boots, four hundred pair of shoes, eighty wigs, eighty waggons and carts, eighty ploughs and used none, fifty saddles, thirty wheelbarrows, so many walking sticks as that eight pounds were offered for them, sixty horses, three hundred pickaxes, two hundred spades & shovels, twentyfive ladders, and two hundred and forty razors.

By these things, we may conclude where this man's heart was: let a servant of Christ in the ministry, be impressed with the worth of souls, and the glory of God in the world, and would he be so careful about many things?

End of No. 6.